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Major News Releases and Speeches

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News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR AUGUST

WASHINGTON, Oct. 4—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today released its monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for August 1982.

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost and liberal.

Esther Winterfeldt, administrator of the Human Nutrition Information Service, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods and other nonfood items bought at the store.

"USDA costs are only guides to spending," Winterfeldt said. "Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes and how much food is prepared at home.

"Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable," she said. "The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families with less money for food. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan."

Details of the four food plans are described in Home and Garden Bulletin No. 94, "Family Food Budgeting. . .for Good Meals and Good Nutrition," which may be purchased for \$2.50 each from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Cost of Food at Home for a Week in August 1982

		Plans		
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate-cost	Liberal
Families:				
Family of 2 (20-54 years)	\$34.10	\$44.10	\$55.30	\$66.20
Family of 2 (55 years and over)	30.70	39.40	48.70	58.20
Family of 4 with preschool children	48.30	61.80	77.10	92.30
Family of 4 with elementary school children	58.30	74.80	93.80	112.20
Individuals in four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	7.80	9.90	12.20	14.50
3-5 years	9.50	11.80	14.60	17.60
6-8 years	12.10	15.40	19.30	23.10
9-11 years	15.20	19.30	24.20	28.90
Females:				
12-19 years	14.40	18.30	22.60	26.90
20-54 years	13.90	17.90	22.30	26.60
55 and over	12.70	16.20	20.00	23.70
Males:				
12-14 years	16.20	20.50	25.60	30.60
15-19 years	17.80	22.60	28.30	34.00
20-54 years	17.10	22.20	28.00	33.60
55 and over	15.20	19.60	24.30	29.20

To estimate your family food costs

— For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown.

— For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent from the amount shown for each meal not eaten at home. Thus, for a person eating lunch out five days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

— For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart are for individuals in four-person families. If your family has more or less than four, total the "individual" figures and make these adjustments, because larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones:

- For a one-person family, add 20 percent.
- For a two-person family, add 10 percent.
- For a three-person family, add 5 percent.
- For a family of five or six persons, subtract 5 percent.
- For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

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USDA INCREASES FEE SCHEDULE FOR FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INSPECTION

WASHINGTON, Oct. 4—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has increased its fees at destination markets for voluntary inspection and grading of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and related products.

Charles Brader, a marketing official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said USDA increased its regular commercial inspection fees, effective Oct. 3, by \$3 to \$4, depending on lot sizes and the type of inspection. The hourly rate increased from \$19 to \$21.

USDA grading services, administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service, are available on request to financially interested parties. The Agricultural Marketing Act requires fees, as nearly as possible, to equal the cost of rendering the services. Brader said the present fees, in effect since December 1980, are no longer adequate to offset operating costs associated with the program.

Details of the new fee schedule are scheduled to be published in the Oct. 4 Federal Register, available at many public libraries.

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USDA FINDS SCAB DAMAGED WHEAT ON LESS THAN 3.5 PERCENT OF HARD RED WHEAT

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6—Less than 3.5 percent of the total 1982 hard red winter wheat crop was damaged by wheat scab, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists said today.

"We studied 160 hard red winter wheat samples from six areas in eastern Kansas and Nebraska," said Mary E. Carter, associate administrator of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. "These were the only hard red winter producing areas where scab damaged wheat had been noted."

The samples were graded by the U.S. Grain Standards and vomitoxin were determined in parts per million for each sample.

According to Carter, the survey confirmed:

- Scab damaged wheat is not always contaminated with vomitoxin;
- Scab damaged wheat was found only in a limited area of the hard red winter wheat producing area; and
- The highest levels of vomitoxin were found in portions of eastern Nebraska.

Wheat scab is a fungus disease which produces a mycotoxin called vomitoxin, which is non-carcinogenic.

"However, as the name implies, the chemical produced by the fungus must be unpleasant since swine may refuse their feed when levels exceed 2 pm," Carter said. "To our knowledge there is no documentation of cases where vomitoxin has caused illness in humans."

Also known as head blight, pink mold, white heads and tombstone scab, the disease commonly occurs in wheat producing areas of the world every year, depending on weather conditions.

"This year in a limited area of the U.S., moist, warm weather was ideal at the precise state of kernel development for scab infection," Carter said.

The USDA data showed the amount of vomitoxin varied for each area and grade factors and vomitoxin responded in the same manner.

Grade-wise the study showed:

- U.S. Grades No. 1 and No. 2 averaged 0.77 pm, ranging from 0.0 to 1.64 pm for the areas tested;
- 81 percent of the samples which graded U.S. No. 3 averaged less than 2 pm;

— Four of the six areas averaged 0.88 pm, ranging from 0.48 to 1.53 pm for U.S. Grades No. 1 through 5; and

— Total damage and total defects were the two grading factors which gave the highest correlation with pm of vomitoxin.

William C. Shuey, of USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service, said they alerted all official inspectors to the wheat scab situation at the onset of harvest. On-site training courses were conducted to insure proper grading of this wheat, in accordance with official U.S. standards for wheat.

The USDA agencies which have worked together in evaluating the situation include the Agricultural Research Service, Federal Grain Inspection Service and the Foreign Agricultural Service. Carter said the Food and Drug Administration will be notifying the appropriate state officials and trade associations of the levels of vomitoxin which would cause concern for the public health if admitted into the food and feed chain.

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INTERSTATE FOOD STAMP FRAUD RING BROKEN

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6—A task force of investigators led by U.S. Department of Agriculture agents smashed an interstate food stamp fraud ring last night with the arrest in Houston of the alleged ring leader, Joseph Henry Brown.

The arrest was based on evidence that Brown organized and led a scheme in which ring members used false identification and fraudulent business fronts to obtain and launder food stamps. The ring members allegedly stole and fenced about \$400,000 in food stamps in Miami, Fla., during 1980 and 1981 and possibly a half-million dollars in Atlanta and Fort Valley, Ga., since 1981.

Brown, 40, was purportedly in the process of setting up a similar operation in Houston when arrested.

"This is the largest food stamp fraud ring we have broken yet," said John Graziano, USDA inspector general. "By taking it out now, we prevent it from expanding its operations."

The investigating task force includes agents of USDA's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Secret Service, the Postal Inspection Service, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Georgia State Department of Human Resources, the Fulton County (Ga.) Department of Family and Children Services, and the Atlanta Police Department.

The investigation is continuing to identify additional members of the ring and determine whether its activities included other areas.

Last Sept. 16, investigators arrested Denise Williams Jackson in Miami and seized numerous food stamp identification cards, drivers licenses and Social Security cards—all in different names. Jackson and several other persons arrested in Miami, were identified as associates of Joseph Henry Brown, who was later traced to Atlanta and then to Houston.

"The \$10 billion plus food stamp program helps needy Americans, but it also tempts criminals," Graziano said. "Our emphasis is to preserve the program for those truly in need."

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USDA IMPLEMENTS NEW RESERVE ROTATION PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7—The U.S. Department today amended regulations governing the farmer-owned grain reserve to allow farmers to remove corn or sorghum from the reserve if the grain is in danger of going out of condition and if that grain is replaced within 15 days.

The new rotation provisions—which apply only to farmers who enter into a new grain reserve agreement on or after Oct. 8—allow farmers to replace reserve corn or sorghum with grain the farmer has on hand, grain bought by the farmer or grain from the farmer's new crop.

According to C. Hoke Leggett, associate administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, USDA on Aug. 16 had issued an interim rule governing the grain reserve. He said today's announcement is an amendment to that interim rule. To permit public comments on the new provisions, the final date for submitting

comments on the interim rule has been extended from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7, Leggett said.

Details of the new provisions are scheduled to appear in the Oct. 8 Federal Register.

Comments may be sent to director, cotton, grain and rice price support division, USDA-ASCS, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013. All comments will be available for public inspection in room 3627 of USDA's South building during normal business hours.

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USDA DEFERS DECISION ON PLANT PEST QUARANTINES

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7—Plant pest quarantines against the golden nematode, pink bollworm, witchweed and gypsy moth will not be revoked until an evaluation is made of the ability of states to enforce their own quarantines, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

Harry C. Mussman, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said the federal quarantines, which had been considered for early cancellation, will remain in force for the time being.

"In June, we issued a notice to state officials, industry and the general public to give them adequate time to prepare for the actions then under consideration," Mussman said. "We received a number of comments asking us to consider all the ramifications of such a shift, and we plan to do this before taking any action."

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BLOCK CALLS THIRD "AGRICULTURE ROUNDTABLE" OCT. 8-9

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block will hold the third "Agriculture Roundtable" Oct. 8-9 at Block Farms in Knox County, Ill.

In separate sections Block will meet with ten foreign ambassadors and with leaders of general farm organizations.

"Trade promotion is essential to a substantial recovery in American agriculture," Block said. "I'm anxious to talk with these ambassadors about the problems and opportunities associated with current and future agricultural trade. This roundtable will give us an opportunity to communicate our concerns and ideas in an informal atmosphere. When the session is completed, we will be a step closer to trading relationships which will benefit all of our nations.

"Of equal importance will be my meeting with the leaders of our general farm organizations on Saturday," he said. "Since these organizations represent 85 percent of all producers belonging to farm organizations, we will be sharing a great amount of constructive thought that comes straight from the grassroots."

The countries represented by the ambassadors are: Australia, Britain, China, Egypt, Denmark, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sweden, Turkey and Venezuela.

General farm organizations represented are National Farmers Organization, National Grange and American Farm Bureau Federation.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will also be represented by Under Secretary Seeley G. Lodwick, Under Secretary Frank W. Naylor, Jr., and Assistant Deputy Secretary Richard Douglas. The U.S. Department of State will be represented by Deputy Secretary Kenneth Dam.

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PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM RESULTS FOR JULY 1982

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7—Participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food stamp program in July was 20.2 million, seasonally down 100,000 from June and 200,000 from a year earlier. These figures exclude Puerto Rico which switched to its own nutrition assistance block grant program in July.

Food stamps issued during July totaled \$780.8 million, down \$6.2 million from June and \$54.1 million from July 1981, according to the preliminary estimates of federal-state assistance programs for July.

The WIC program, a supplementary food program for women, infants and children, reached a new peak level of participation in July, serviced 2.35 million participants. July participation was 360,000 above June and 390,000 above the level in July 1981. Program participation has increased steadily for the past 12 months.

Puerto Rico has 1.69 million participants in its nutrition assistance program in July at a cost of \$61.1 million. Participation in June, the last month under the food stamp program, averaged 1.8 million participants at a cost of \$74.5 million.

	July 1982	June 1982	July 1981
The Food Stamp Program: ^a			
People participating this month (millions)	20.4	20.3	20.2
Value of bonus coupons (millions)	\$834.9	\$787.0	\$780.8
Average bonus per person	\$40.83	\$38.78	\$38.68
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations:			
Number of projects in operation	86	83	83
People participating this month (thousands)	89.4	95.6	92.3
The Special Supplemental Food Program (WIC):			
People participating this month (millions)	2.0	2.3	2.3
Federal food costs (millions)	\$54.6	\$69.5	\$70.2

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program:

People participating this month (thousands)	115.3	126.5	126.3
Federal cost (millions)	\$ 1.9	\$ 2.2	\$ 2.3

The Child Care Food Program:

Children participating (thousands)	587	756	639
Federal cost (millions)	\$24.2	\$20.4	\$19.9

The Summer Food Program For Children:

Participation (millions)	1.9	1.0	1.5
Federal cost (millions)	\$53.2	\$18.8	\$53.0

NOTE: During the months of summer vacation, no data are provided for the national school lunch and school breakfast programs.

^aPuerto Rico has been excluded from all months.

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RULES FOR JOB-ORIENTED WORKFARE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON, Oct. 8—Final regulations which will allow state and local jurisdictions the option of incorporating a job-oriented workfare program into the food stamp program were announced today by an official of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"This innovative program is designed to provide many of our food stamp recipients with on-the-job training as they improve their job skills and employability," said Samuel J. Cornelius, administrator of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. "We are hopeful that skills learned in this program will enable more recipients to graduate to private sector employment."

Under the workfare program, able-bodied food stamp recipients between the ages of 18 and 60 can be required to do public service work in return for food stamp allotments. Qualifications for entry into the program will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If an eligible recipient refuses without good cause to comply with the workfare process, the entire household will be ineligible to receive food stamp benefits for two months.

Cornelius said workfare pilot projects, in operation since July 1979, already have been successful in training recipients for permanent employment in a variety of professions.

The recipient's work will be valued at a rate equivalent to the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher. A maximum of 30 hours work per week may be required of any recipient.

The regulations also allow participating jurisdictions to combine food stamp workfare operations with those of other workfare-type programs that states and local jurisdictions might already administer.

The state agency will be responsible for referring eligible recipients to workfare operating agencies, establishing and processing sanctions for noncompliance, and for disbursing federal funds to operating agencies. The operating agencies, besides monitoring job sites, also will interview and assign recipients.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service will provide 50 percent funding for costs incurred in administering the program, including reimbursing participants up to \$25 a month for transportation and other work-related expenses.

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